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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PINR](#) [AMGT](#) [RU](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VORONIN: RELYING ON 5-PLUS-2 TO AVOID RUSSIAN TRAP

Classified By: Ambassador Asif Chaudhry for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In his first meeting with Ambassador, President Voronin expressed his commitment to solving the Transnistria conflict only in the 5-plus-2 format. He wanted to avoid falling into any Russian "traps" that could appear if he negotiated directly with the Russians. Outside interests such as CFE and Ukraine's desire to join NATO were complicating efforts to solve the Transnistrian problem. Nonetheless, eventually it will be solved, and President Voronin asked the USG to consider giving post-conflict funding for a program of eight confidence-building measures he had developed. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador opened his September 30 initial courtesy call on President Voronin with a promise to build even stronger, friendly relations with Moldova. President Voronin responded with his own appreciation of the warm relations he has enjoyed with the United States and with all previous U.S. Ambassadors.

Moldova Needs 5-plus-2 to Avoid Russian "Trap"

¶3. (C) President Voronin confirmed that Moldova would participate in the upcoming 5-plus-2 talks in Vienna October 7-8. He underscored his conviction that negotiations on Transnistria could take place only in the 5-plus-2 format. Voronin said that he strongly desired a solution, but would not make an agreement "at any price."

¶4. (C) Voronin said that the Transnistrian decision to participate in the October 7-8 meetings in Vienna would depend upon Russia; if Russia told them to participate, they would. Voronin went on to express concerns that Russia would come up with a federation plan that could threaten Moldova as an independent subject. This would be a "trap" for Moldova. Voronin noted that if he signed any decision accepting a Federation, Transnistria could then declare that it was leaving the Federation to be an independent state.

¶5. (C) Voronin said that a second trap in the Kozak Memorandum had been the proposal to keep Russian armed forces in Transnistria for a period of 20 years. In order to avoid this trap, Voronin would stand firmly on the principle of the 5-plus-2 format. That way, he argued, if he missed spotting a hidden trap, he could count on his friends from the U.S., EU or Ukraine to help him.

¶6. (C) Voronin did not provide many details about his own discussions with the Russians. He said simply that the Russians did not object to holding negotiations in the 5-plus-2 format. In his meeting with President Medvedev, Voronin had agreed that next would be a Medvedev-Smirnov meeting (which took place September 3), to be followed by a Voronin-Smirnov meeting, and then a Voronin-Smirnov plus Medvedev meeting in 2-plus-1 format. Voronin underlined that he perceived such meetings as intermediary consultations before beginning negotiations in a 5-plus-2 format, not negotiations. Voronin suggested that many people make the mistake of not differentiating between consultations and negotiations. No one signs any documents after consultations; only in negotiations, he underlined.

¶7. (C) Voronin noted that a Transnistrian settlement is further

complicated by games being played outside the borders of Moldova. CFE cannot be signed, he said, because Russian troops are stationed in Moldova. This situation is not convenient for Russia. Additionally, with Ukraine aspiring to become a member of NATO, it is convenient for Russia to maintain the Transnistrian territory along the Ukrainian border under Russian control. Moldova was thus a hostage to a wider situation that included factors in the Black Sea region and other interests hindering the settlement process.

Time to Think about Post-Conflict Funding

18. (C) Eventually the conflict will be solved, posited Voronin, and hence it was already time to begin thinking about the post-conflict situation. Voronin said he doubted that Russia would give financial support for post-conflict reintegration. Voronin told Ambassador that for the first time, in 2009, the GOM was opening a new budget chapter for expenses dealing with reintegration. The GOM had come up with eight confidence-building measures, which all required financial expenditures. Voronin said he would highly appreciate American examination of and funding for these categories. The Ambassador expressed his willingness to look at the proposals and see what elements the USG might be able to support. He noted that the embassy was currently in the process of conducting a review to determine USAID activities over the next few years.

Voronin Satisfied with Work of Current Government

19. (C) President Voronin expressed his satisfaction with the current government, noting that the majority were young enough that 17 years ago they were still students, and hence were not influenced by old

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Soviet ideas. He praised the organizational skills, professionalism and national spirit of his cadre. The parliament, he noted, was the product of political forces, and hence different ideas could be expressed there. Voronin suggested that at this point national consciousness has been formed. More than 90 percent of the population sees its future only as an independent state, and not united with any other country.

110. (C) The Ambassador underscored the importance of the upcoming Parliamentary elections. It was a unique historic moment. The whole world, he said, would be watching to see what will happen. Hence, it was important for Moldova's European aspirations that both the elections and the pre-electoral campaign period be conducted properly, including media freedom.

Bilateral Issues: A site for New Embassy

111. (C) The Ambassador mentioned to the President that the Embassy was still looking for a site to build a new embassy building, and indicated USG interest in the MOD site. President Voronin responded that this territory belonged to the Government, not the municipality, and was a good site. The Ambassador mentioned the old stadium field, which is centrally located. While at first the President ruled it out categorically, saying this has to be a stadium, he responded to the Ambassador's suggestion that the GOM could use the money paid for this site to build a new stadium elsewhere. The president noted the difficulties of building a 40,000-seat stadium at the downtown location, and as a result, that site might once again become available for consideration.

Comment:

112. (C) The meeting seemed a positive and friendly opening to launch the new Ambassador's relationship with President Voronin. Though Voronin touched on some familiar themes expressing distrust of Russian intentions and desire for integration with Europe, he seemed to enjoy dialogue with his new interlocutor and to be eager to build a good working relationship. As Moldova tries to move forward in the 5-plus-2 process, the leadership needs to know that doors in the west are open. In the post-Georgia world, this is a time when Moldova

most needs to know it has options besides Russia.

CHAUDHRY